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ABSTRACT

This study used an ecological perspective to examine the development and implementation of Hopeful Horizons, a program designed to serve the educational needs of homeless children in Morgan County, Oklahoma. Information was collected through journals, observations, key informant interviews, surveys of administrators and staff, and psychological assessments of the children. Program components were education, social services and health, counseling, parent, and volunteer. Analyses indicated that: it was difficult to find time to develop individualized educational programs; volunteers were often not available; an additional counselor and social work assistant were needed to fulfill the social component; receiving schools were oppositional to receiving homeless students; the speech language pathologist position was eliminated because of difficulties in delivering services; and the counselor position was not filled for 2 years. In addition, parental difficulties limited parents' participation. Without personnel to recruit and train volunteers, only 5 volunteers were involved in the first 2 years of the program. About 400 children were served by the program. Points of contention among staff included the shifting program, whether to include emancipated youth, agency commitment, and responsibility. Assessment results yielded a profile of a homeless child concerned about family relationships, but also experiencing one or more of the following: normal motivation; a visual-motor delay suggesting difficulty with school-related tasks; poor planning ability, organization skills, motor coordination, and emotional stability; and a positive academic self-concept, fairly high anxiety level, and depressive tendencies. From 1990-91 to 1994-95, the program grew in number of personnel, volunteers, children served, and budget and location size. (Contains approximately 70 references.) (Author/KB)

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